

Business & Environmental Roundtable Joint Meeting Meeting Summary

Thursday, October 18, 2007

Attendees

Jane Austin, Matthew Auten, Alfred Bettencourt, Laura Brion, Sandra Brownell, Joseph Callanan, Tomas Ennis, Sheila Dormody, Gary Ezovski, John Fornaro, Rupert Friday, Ron Gizzarelli, Jeff Hakanson, Bill Hayden, Alison, Hayes, Richard Hittinger, Chris Kearns, Juan Mariscal, Eugenia Marks, Ken McDermott, Maggie McCormick, Tim O'Connor, Denise Parillo, Kevin Purdy, Jennifer Siegel, John Sinnott, Mike Sousa, Judi Staven, Arthur Yatsko

DEM Staff: Ken Ayars, Terri Bisson, Alicia Good, Janet Keller, Mickie Musselman (meeting notes), Elizabeth Stone, Michael Sullivan

1. **Welcome/Introductions** – Director Sullivan welcomed participants and led introductions.

2. Farm, Forest and Open Space Rulemaking

The agenda was re-ordered to allow Ken Ayars to respond to a Farm Bureau Issue and get to another meeting. Al Bettencourt asked about the status of rulemaking for Farm, Forest and Open Space (FFOS) lands regarding taxation at different levels in different communities. Current law allows communities to assess part of the land (a house lot) at the “highest and best use” rate and some communities have raised taxes significantly on farm owners as a result. The Farm Bureau outlined the issue in more detail in a recent newsletter. Mr. Bettencourt will provide for circulation to Roundtable members.

Ken Ayars said there was a bill to address this submitted last year and it did not pass. Attorneys at DEM are uncomfortable with rulemaking in the absence of a law. Director Sullivan suggested that the issue be taken up before the FFOS Land Value Subcommittee(?), however, he acknowledged that the committee had not met in a while. Ken will follow up.

3. **Meeting Minutes** - The meeting minutes for the June 21 meeting were accepted as written.

4. Presentation: Environmental Justice/Brownfields Stakeholder Process

Liz Stone gave a presentation on the Environmental Justice Stakeholder group's draft policy for environmental justice considerations in the remediation of brownfields. Although the policy was developed for the Site Remediation Program, the process can be used as a model for other DEM programs. The presentation will be online with the draft policy and a map of environmental justice (EJ) communities is online in the DEM environmental resource maps.

The policy took effect for sites in EJ communities added to the Brownfields program after July 31, 2007. It requires expanded outreach; posting information where people gather near the site; notice to local officials; signage at the site and an information repository for sites that includes both electronic and hard copies of materials. If there is significant interest by the public about a particular site the responsible party must hold a meeting onsite and some sites may require a public involvement plan.

Since the policy has been in effect there have been 13 new projects, with 5 of those in EJ areas. The Stakeholder website can be reached through a link on the Director's page on the DEM website. Terry Gray will give a presentation to RISEP members at their November meeting. For more information contact RISEP at <http://www.risep.org/meetings.htm> or call 789-6224.

5. Updates:

- **Budget:** Director Sullivan said DEM is giving up open positions to partially meet the required reductions for the FY2008 budget. DEM has an FTE allocation of 519 positions but funding for 492 and will have to cut more (filled) positions. Sullivan said DEM will be expanding the range of electronic submissions to help offset personnel cuts.

Q: Have the unions have suggested anything in place of cuts to help with the budget.

A: No

Q: How will personnel reductions and bumping affect operations with people taking positions they do not necessarily know how to do?

A: In the last contract bumping was limited to 3 moves. That should significantly limit disruptions due to position changes. State rules require that people be qualified to do the jobs they propose to move into.

Q: Can DEM take the opportunity to learn from private industry how to streamline operations with fewer personnel?

A: DEM is always willing to accept suggestions.

Q: Will the cuts be from the 519 or 492 staffing level?

A: The cuts will start from 492 less vacancies.

Q: Will DEM publish a new organizational chart after the cuts?

A: Yes.

Q: Can DEM get communities to do more to relieve DEM of some work?

A: DEM has many partners such as the Narragansett Bays, Rivers and Watershed Team that identify opportunities and coordinate with other state agencies, towns and non-profits.

- **Legislation:**

DEM is proposing that legislation that requires several separate submittals be changed to allow one electronic submittal to entities such as DEM, the Contractor's Board, etc.

The industrial remediation bill to increase fees for polluters will be re-submitted.

The cesspool phase-out bill passed and regulations will be completed by the end of the year.

Following RI's joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) DEM is working on sales of RI's allocation of greenhouse gas credits, how to put proceeds into efficiencies and how to do this with existing staff.

Southern Union was indicted recently for mercury contamination a few years ago in a residential complex. DEM's Emergency Response Team responded, oversaw the cleanup and the testimony of Office of Compliance and Inspection staff led to indictment.

DEM will request bond issues of \$85 million next year for water infrastructure, cesspool phase-out and wastewater.

The level of bonding to be requested for open space has not been determined, but would support agriculture, open space acquisition, and recreation through parks and trails.

Q: Why not talking about open space acquisition for future development of water supply?

A: The Water Resources Board just acquired a parcel for water supply from an \$11 million fund.

DEM has recently acquired the Shepherd Farm in western RI and will soon announce acquisition of a 600 acre property. Development rights to two parcels in Jamestown were recently acquired protecting more than 100 acres of one of the most recognizable vistas in RI. DEM will soon own more than 1 mile of coastline in Warwick at Rocky Point where the public will have access to the shore.

Matt Auten said the Environmental Council of RI will support environmental bonds for clean water and open space. Other legislation they are working on include water supply and global warming.

- **Other:**

RI Smoke Free Beaches - Eugenia Marks said the voluntary RI Smoke Free Beaches initiative was a cooperative effort by Audubon, DEM, DOH, the Sierra Club and the RI Lung Association. In the coastal cleanup that Audubon has led for the past 23 years volunteers record the numbers of each type of debris picked up is also on the website and cigarette butts are the most prevalent item on the beaches. A report on a survey conducted by Audubon and two interns from DEM will be on the Audubon website at ASRI.org. One of the findings of the survey is that 85% of people on the beaches say they are bothered a lot or somewhat by smoking and cigarette litter on beaches.

The group plans to repeat the no smoking program at state beaches next year and to recruit municipalities and private beaches to join in the effort, to begin on Memorial Day. They also plan to develop a metric to measure potential effect of the program on the level of cigarette litter.

6. Presentation: RIWINDS

Director Sullivan said Andy Dzykewicz was not able to attend the meeting to give his presentation on RIWINDS, but his goal, set by the Governor, is to generate 15% of the energy used in Rhode Island from wind. DEM wants to install 4 or 5 wind turbines on properties it owns. Electrical costs are a significant part of operating expenses at sites such as Fishermen's Memorial Campground, where the electrical bill is about \$75,000 per year.

7. Roundtable Feedback

Terri Bisson asked members for feedback on Roundtable meetings. She reported on a few items that have surfaced, including: few responses to requests for topics and agenda items; a member suggestion to move the meetings to Mondays or Fridays; and, a member's displeasure with combining the Environmental and Business roundtables. She distributed a meeting evaluation form for members to complete. She will also email the evaluation to capture feedback from members not in attendance. Once the evaluations are in, Terri, Matt Auten and Gary Ezovski will meet to schedule and design 2008 meetings.

Director Sullivan stated that he hoped the combined meetings would open up dialogue on the issues between business and environmental community and also that DEM had to consolidate the meetings to reflect the diminishing resources of the Department. Director Sullivan also asked members for suggestions and hosts for other venues.

Gary Ezovski said that introducing issues that really matter is difficult for some to bring up in meetings because of barriers such as fear of retribution.

Jane Austin said the Greenhouse Gas Stakeholders process brought together a variety of interests and provided a good model for resolving difficult issues.

8. Announcements, Future Meeting Topics & Dates

- Terri Bisson noted a few events advertised on the back of the agenda, including:

- Thursday, October 25, 2007 – 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. - Getting There: Transportation for a Prosperous Rhode Island, Paff Auditorium, URI Providence Campus, 80 Washington Street – Topics include the future of public transit, transportation and development, transportation and public health. More information: The Apeiron Institute for Environmental Living, (401) 228-793. Register on-line at <http://www.sustainableri.org/gettingthere.htm>.
- Monday, October 29, 2007 – 7 -8:30 p.m. – Environmental Factors and Breast Cancer Risk – URI Kingston Campus, Memorial Union, Atrium One. Learn about common, everyday products and the potential link to breast cancer. More information: Liberty Goodwin, TIP, (401) 351-9193 or liberty@toxicsinfo.org.
- Saturday, November 3, 2007 – 9-3 p.m. – Rhode Island Environmental Justice Forum, Johnson & Wales University, Harborside Campus Recreation Center, Providence – Learn what can be done about the environmental problems facing low income and minority communities. Registration required. More information: Steve Fischback, RI Legal Services, (401) 274-2652 x182 or steve.fischback@gmail.com.
- Friday, November 23, 2007 – 10-2 PM – 11th Annual Buy Nothing Day and Winter Coat Exchange – State House Lawn, Providence and the Visitors Center, 175 Main Street, Pawtucket. More information: Greg Gerritt, (401)331-0529 or gerritt@mindspring.com.
- **Next Meeting Date** – To Be Determined